

Lunatic

by Mapu

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Summary: Lucas runs into the cliché madscientist and has a big attack of the victimsyndrome

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Nervously double-checking to make sure he had everything, Lucas suddenly realized he couldn't see his statistical analysis of the results to date. He couldn't believe he'd left them in his room on the seaQuest! His entire proposal rested on that paper. Frantically he raked through the previously neatly packed papers becoming more anxious by the moment ... his flight was due to leave any moment, and he'd left half his stuff behind. Relief swept through him when at last he found the papers he was looking for. He'd put them in the little zipped section in the lid of the case so he wouldn't lose them.

"Feeling a little tense?" Captain Bridger asked him with a smile.

"What gives it away?" Lucas asked wryly, holding his hand out flat so the Captain could see the slight tremor that was running through his fingers.

"Relax... You'll do just fine... you've put together a great proposal. Just try to enjoy the experience... If you plan to make science your career, you're going to have to get used to pitching your ideas to the money-men. It's the way the world works," the

Captain told his young ward, patting him on the shoulder.

"All passengers for flight 606 to New York please proceed to gate 37 for boarding," the flight announcer said through the overly loud speakers.

"Well ... I guess that's your flight. I'll see you in a few days. Good Luck, kiddo ... and relax," the captain told Lucas, giving him a quick hug.

Lucas took a deep breath, nodded, and then gave the Captain a weak wavering smile. He picked up his document case and went to the boarding gate.

Lucas settled into his seat at the rear of the plane and tried to relax, but found it next to impossible. An hour into the flight, he was just beginning to find some level of relative calm when one of the passengers toward the front of the plane leapt out of his chair, brandishing a weapon. The man began to yell and wave the weapon around threateningly. Lucas was too far from him to understand exactly what he was saying, but from what he could hear it seemed the man belonged to some kind of religious cult ... something about the "light of fire." With one hand, the man tore open his shirt to reveal several vials of liquid strapped to his chest. Lucas didn't know much about weapons but he could recognize a bomb when he saw one. Instinctively he threw his head down between his knees. Moments later the deafening sound of an explosion followed almost instantly by a shock wave hit him. Lucas found himself falling, tumbling through the air. In some remote part of his mind ... a part that wasn't screaming in terror ... Lucas understood what had happened. The man had carried out his threat... and had detonated the bomb. The automatic, anti-terrorist counter measures built into the airplane had detected the detonation and had ejected the passengers. Lucas felt the intense cold of the thin atmosphere tear at his skin, burning it in streaks... He had enough presence of mind to remember the boring words of the flight attendant just prior to take off...

"In the event of a catastrophic ejection from the aircraft please remember to keep your eyes closed and hold your breath for as long as possible... " the pretty flight attendant had said. At the time Lucas had been more interested in the speaker than the words spoken but fortunately some of the words had stayed.

He held his breath until his lungs burned and he just couldn't hold it any longer. Taking a deep breath, he was immensely relieved that the air, though chilly, wasn't freezing his lungs. Encouraged, he opened his eyes. He was slowly rotating as he fell, and he was impressed at how well the gyrostabilizers built into the chair worked. All around him he could see other people in similar chairs falling through the air. They looked ... ridiculous, and Lucas began to laugh... his laugh took on an almost hysterical note. If any of the other passengers were laughing or screaming Lucas couldn't tell, their sounds were ripped away from his ears by the rushing winds.

Lucas began to worry as he saw several of the other chairs deploy the built-in parachute. His hadn't opened yet and he kept dropping at an alarming rate. He had begun to fear that his chair was defective or had been damaged during the explosion when his chute finally opened. As the ground got closer he pulled his feet up to his chest and

wrapped his arms around his knees hugging them... another thing he remembered from the pre-flight instructions.

Lucas' chair hit the ground hard, bounced then rolled down the small incline where he landed. The parachute became entangled around the chair, trapping Lucas firmly within its folds. Lucas struggled desperately to free himself. Finally he managed to find a break in the cloth and struggle free. Dazed, he collapsed onto the ground, his head spinning, his mind totally unable to accept the rapid changes that had happened in just minutes.

He staggered to his feet and began to look for other survivors ... forgetting the last piece of safety instruction ... the bit about staying near the chair so that the rescuers could home in on it's beacon and rescue the passenger. Lucas was far beyond rational thought ... he just wanted to go home.

After several hours of aimless wandering, it occurred to him that he was well and truly lost. He was also depressed, scared, and his arms, legs and face stung from the windburn. Dejectedly he sat on an exposed rock and looked out at the peaceful country setting. It was hard to believe that he had just survived a plane bombing ... everything looked so normal.

Looking into the sky he saw a helicopter flying low over the trees. He leapt up on to the rock and waved his arms excitedly to attract the attention of the pilot. The helicopter changed its direction and headed directly for him. It set down in a small clearing not far from Lucas. Lucas scrabbled through the bushes toward it. Two men, in what appeared to be uniforms, got out of the craft and waved to him. Lucas smiled, walking toward them. He was relieved to have been rescued at last. He could see several other people inside the helicopter, and assumed them to be other survivors.

One of the survivors looked out at him and yelled, "Run kid! Get away from..." He didn't get any further because one of the uniformed men spun and struck him hard in the head, silencing him.

Lucas stopped stunned... these were definitely not rescue people. He turned and began to run back the way he had come... toward the safety of the surrounding trees. From behind him he could hear a man swearing loudly, and the unmistakable sound of pursuit. He'd almost made it to cover when he felt a sudden sharp pain in his back. He stumbled forward as a wave of weakness passed through his body. He kept trying to run, but his body wouldn't obey him anymore.

Stumbling again, he grabbed on to a tree trunk for support. Reaching up behind his back, he felt the source of the pain and was surprised to feel a foreign object embedded into his back. Pulling it free, he brought it around to the front so he could have a good look at it. It was a dart. The dart seemed to blur, distort and then dim. Lucas had just enough time to realize he had been drugged before unconsciousness took him and he slumped to the ground.

Lucas woke to find himself strapped face down on a narrow table. His head pounded from the stress he'd endured and the lingering after effects of the drugged dart he'd been shot with. Somewhere behind him

he could hear someone moving. He tried to turn his head to see who the person was, but discovered some kind of clamping device had immobilized his head. Becoming afraid, he called out to the unseen presence, "Who are you? ... Why am I tied down?"

"Shut up kid or I'll make this as hard for you as I can," was the only reply.

Lucas froze as he felt hands at the back of his neck. There was a buzzing noise and the touch of cold sharp metal against the back of his neck. With shock, Lucas realized the unseen man was shaving the hair from the nape of his neck. Lucas tried to buck the other man away but could barely move. The only thing he succeeded in doing was having the hair clipper prongs cut the skin of his neck.

"Move again and I'll shave the lot off," the voice snarled at him.

"Why are you doing this?" Lucas asked in a terrified voice, not sure he really wanted the answer.

"I'm prepping you for surgery," the man behind him told him gleefully.

"Surgery ... what type surgery?" Lucas demanded

"Very important surgery, let me assure you young man," a new voice supplied an answer of sorts.

"What are you doing to me?" Lucas insisted.

"You have been selected to participate in ground breaking research, my young friend. I am going to insert a micro chip into your brain ... here," the new man told Lucas touching the back of his head in the newly shaved area. "This will allow me to monitor the minute chemical changes in your brain as the experiment progresses. Unfortunately since you had to be drugged, you are slightly behind the rest of your experimental batch... . But I don't think that will be a problem," the doctor explained.

"Say goodnight," the first voice said, fitting a gas mask over Lucas's face. Lucas held his breath and struggled to break free from it, but eventually he had to breathe and the world went dark.

Lucas woke and for the second time found himself strapped down. This time he was seated in a chair, his arms strapped to the chair arms and his feet strapped to the chair legs. He sat in an empty room, facing a large glass-viewing window. Beyond the glass he saw an elderly man wearing a standard lab coat talking to a tall uniformed man. The man wore the same type of uniform as the men in the helicopter had been wearing.

"Ah ... you're awake. That's good. It's so important you be awake or the results will be corrupted and then all our effort would be wasted," the older man told Lucas pleasantly.

"Awake for what?" Lucas asked quietly. This man and his pleasant attitude terrified Lucas more than any man he'd ever seen. He seemed

to have absolutely no concern at all for the people that he used in his experiments. It chilled Lucas to the bone.

"Why, for the introduction of the mutation, of course. It's absolutely critical I record the very first moments of infection. It has taken ages, but I have finally found a way to introduce it into the body before it dies... it's very delicate you know. I tried for years to create a serum that I could just inject, but it just kept failing. It was all dreadfully disappointing. Then I had a brilliant idea... just brilliant! I attached the mutagen to a virus and introduced it to a mammal, a rodent actually... and it stayed alive. So now all I have to do is have a direct transfer of body fluids between any two mammals and the mutagen can be spread," the insane doctor explained in detail, while he adjusted the settings on the control panel in front of him.

"Okay I'm all ready now ... here we go. Begin recording," he instructed the uniformed man who turned on the video recorder set up and aimed at Lucas. Lucas tried to struggle against the bonds, but they were tight and didn't give at all. A small door opened in the floor and Lucas watched, horrified, as several dozen rats streamed through the opening toward him. He uselessly increased his struggles, and from a distance he heard the doctor narrating the experiment's details and progress.

The rats turned against each other, biting and clawing those around them. Within moments the rats had spread throughout the room. Lucas held still, trying not to bring himself to their notice. He watched, transfixed, as several of the small creatures charged him. The moment they reached him they attacked, clawing and biting his legs. He screamed as he felt the small sharp teeth sink into his flesh.

From the other room he heard the scientist excitedly record the event into his experiment log "Infection initiated at 7:14:23... Eliminating infection vector," the man said, reaching over to casually flip a switch. Suddenly every rat in the contamination room spasmed and died.

Several minutes passed as Lucas wept from the pain of the rat bites and fear. He had no idea what had been introduced into his body but he was certain he wasn't going to like the results. Finally the interconnecting door opened and the tall uniformed man came in, followed by the scientist.

"That was just marvelous. You're the first one to have an instant response to the mutagen. It's going to take some time, of course, before the effects begin to show, so we'll just put you into one of the holding cells ... I can monitor your progress remotely anyway," the man enthused as he approached Lucas.

The guard undid Lucas bonds and dragged the boy to his feet. "Move," he said shoving Lucas toward the door. Lucas moved meekly toward the door until he realized an opportunity for escape. Taking two quick steps forward, he passed through the door and flung it shut behind him. The door automatically locked, trapping the other two men on the inside. Lucas didn't waste any time checking to see how secure the men were. He knew, at the very best, that closing the door had been a delaying tactic. Running full speed, he took off down the hall. As he ran he passed a glass case set into the wall, he was several meters down the hall before he realized he had just run passed a map of the

complex. Running back, he quickly looked over the schematic and committed it to memory before running again. He'd been lucky ... he had been running in the right direction.

Within moments he was clear of the building and running across open ground. Behind him he heard an alarm sound. He pored on the speed, running as fast as he could. There were shouts and the sound of barking dogs ... he'd been spotted. Lucas gasped for breath but kept up his pace. He would reach the fence before the dogs got to him. They were fast but he had a good lead on them. He reached the fence and leapt up as high as he could so that it would be easier to climb over.

The moment his hands came into contact with the fence, Lucas felt a shock of electricity jolt through his body. The power of the current threw him back the way he had come and Lucas crumpled to the ground. Moments later he found himself under attack by two guard dogs. The dogs leapt at him nipping and biting any exposed part of his body they could reach. Lucas tried to fend away the dog attacking his face with a hand. The animal sank its teeth into his arm and began to shake its head. Lucas screamed in pain as blood gushed from the wound.

Seconds later several security men arrived at the scene. "Damn! Contain the dogs!" Lucas heard one of the men shout. In moments both dogs were dead, shot by their owners. Lucas dragged his injured arm free of the dead animal's mouth, and cradled it to his chest.

"Be careful you don't get any of his blood on you," one of the guards warned another as the man bent over Lucas to examine him.

"Hell ... he's covered in blood," the examining guard told the others. After a moment more of examination, the guard added, "Hang on, I've got an idea."

The man reached down to Lucas and grabbed a generous handful of the boy's hair and dragged him up to his feet, ignoring the gasp of pain it caused. The man angled Lucas's face up so he could look into his eyes. With his free hand, the guard brought his gun up and held it before Lucas's eyes.

"Do anything I don't like and you won't live to take a second breath... got it?" he threatened.

"Yes," Lucas whispered, nodding. He fully believed in the man's threat. Satisfied, the man held Lucas' head down so that the boy had to keep his body bent. With Lucas stooped over, the man and the rest of the accompanying guards dragged him back across the grounds and into the building.

He was taken to an empty room and shoved roughly inside. After what seemed like several hours but was only really minutes, three men entered the room. All wore protective clothing, that covered their entire bodies. One of the men carried a medical kit. He approached Lucas without speaking and began to treat his injuries. Lucas didn't need to be told to behave, the easy way the other men held their weapons said everything they need to say ... loudly and clearly. Lucas behaved himself.

As soon as Lucas had been treated and his bite wounds dressed, he was

lead from the room. He was taken to a part of the building complex he hadn't been to before. From his memory of the schematic, he knew the door in front of him lead to one of several large subterranean rooms. One guard opened the door, and motioned for Lucas to go in. The sounds of people screaming and fighting in the dimly lit room frightened him as much as the shadowy shapes he could see. Lucas tried to back away from the entrance, but the guard behind him shoved him hard. Lucas stumbled through the entrance and fell, tumbling down the short flight of steps. He landed sprawled at the foot of the steps, to the amused laughter of the guards.

Lucas scrambled back to his feet, and backed toward the dimly seen wall behind him somewhere. His entrance had attracted the attention of several of the dark room's inhabitants. They made deranged hooting and howling noises as they moved toward him. As they came closer Lucas gasped ... they were barely recognizable as human.

With horror Lucas recognized one of the men in front of him as the one who had tried to warn Lucas when he'd been kidnapped. The man's face was covered in lumpy growths, and fine dark hair covered much of the man's skin. He looked almost more like an ape than a human. The man screeched aggressively at Lucas and swatted the boy hard across the head. Lucas tried to duck the blow, but it connected and sent him spinning to the floor. Holding the arm injured in the dog attack protectively across his chest, Lucas used his feet and good arm to propel himself backward away from the man.

Seeing that the newcomer wasn't a threat to his domination of the pack, the alpha male turned away, intent to pursue one of the females instead. The other submissive males of the pack weren't as content. The new male may not be a threat to the alpha male's position, but he certainly had potential to upset the delicate pecking order that had been established.

Lucas backed off, horrified, as several of the men-like creatures simultaneously attacked him. He defended himself as well as he could against the incoming blows but his opponents outmatched him in size, number and aggression. Lucas felt the bones in his chest give way as one of his attackers landed a vicious kick there, using his whole body behind the blow. Lucas crumpled to the floor as his attacker hooted in victory. The fight moved away from him, and Lucas' victor became the newest target for attack. Lucas had already been firmly established at the bottom of the hierarchy.

For several hours Lucas kept as far away from as many of the inhabitants of the room as he could. He wasn't always successful and had numerous bruises to show for it. From time to time he felt his face, searching for signs that the transformation had begun, and each time he had been relieved to find his face clear of new growths and hair. He knew something was happening to him, he could feel a change in his mind ... in the way he thought. He was becoming increasingly aggressive by the moment. Several times he caught himself looking around the room, his eyes settling on an inhabitant, and Lucas would be gripped by an almost uncontrollable urge to attack them. Each time he had fought back the impulse, sickened by the thought.

The door at the top of the stairs opened and several guards, wearing bio-suits, entered waving flaming torches around. The other inhabitants screamed in fear and huddled back against the far wall ... as far from the fire as they could. Lucas found a strong bright

light being shone into his eyes.

"Huh! ... It's true. He hasn't changed," one of the newcomers said. Lucas felt an urge to kill swelling up in him and fought it down again.

The man reached down and pulled Lucas to his feet. He led the unresisting boy up the stairs and out of the room. Lucas was lead down the hall by three of the guards. He recognized the hall and knew he had been there before but was having trouble remembering exactly when. The man behind him pushed him forward when he slowed his pace. Suddenly the urge to kill returned, and this time Lucas was powerless against it.

Spinning, he attacked the guard directly behind him, catching the man totally unprepared. The remaining two guards were stunned by the ferocity of the attack for a moment but then moved to contain their captive. Sensing the threat Lucas redirected his attack. In moments all three men lay unconscious and bleeding on the floor. Lucas turned away, the impulse leaving him as quickly as it had come.

Lucas passed a doorway, stopped and retraced his steps. He stood staring at the room's contents for a long time. It was filled with machinery. Even in his confused state Lucas knew he recognized much of the equipment. He entered the room and began to play with the controls on one of the panels, flipping switches at random. An alarm filled the room, scaring him. He backed away from the source of the sound, confused and frightened. A wave of aggression swept over him again and he picked up the nearest object and began to strike the console with it. He kept hitting it until the noise stopped. Loosing interest in the room he left ... unaware and unconcerned by the fire that erupted from the back of the panel he had attacked.

Minutes later he was in another room when a huge explosion ripped through the complex. Lucas screamed, an almost animal sound, as flames leapt through the open door. An equipment storage cabinet teetered, then toppled over. Lucas tried to get clear of the falling object, but didn't make it.

Lucas woke. His head pounded and pain radiated from almost every point on his body. With great effort he lifted his heavy eyelids and looked around the room. He recognized it, his eyes settled on the man standing next to him, and he smiled slightly.

"Hey, kiddo ... how are you doing?" Captain Bridger asked, concern etched deeply into his exhausted face.

"Not too good... " Lucas managed to mutter.

"I'm not surprised. You've been through a lot," the Captain commented.

"What happened?" Lucas asked genuinely confused and unable to remember

"What's the last thing you do recall?" the Captain asked, needing to know where to begin.

"I was on my way to New York ... the plane blew up and I was falling. That's it, I can't remember too much after that ... just images," Lucas told the Captain after a moment's concentration.

"Oh well ... quite a bit happened after that I'm afraid," the Captain began.

"Like what?" Lucas interrupted.

"Like ... you and several other survivors of the crash were kidnapped by a nut case. He pretended to help the search and rescue effort, but he was out collecting guinea pigs for his experiments. I'm sorry, kiddo, but he infected you with a mutative virus... it's okay though. Doctor Westphalen was able to counteract its effects," the Captain reassured the teenager after he noticed the horrified look on the boy's face.

"What else?" Lucas asked, preparing himself for anything.

"Well, we don't have all the details yet either ... but it seems you have some animal bites and someone beat the hell out of you. When we found you ... you were in a room by yourself, pinned under some wreckage. There was an explosion at the complex where you were being held. Which is what drew our attention there in the first place. The building was on fire and you have some smoke inhalation damage to your lungs... you are going to be spending some time in the hyper-barometric chamber, I'm afraid. The good news is that the doctor tells me you will eventually make a full recovery," the Captain finished explaining the events.

Lucas was silent for several minutes as he processed all the information the Captain had given him. Part of him wished he could remember but another part was glad he couldn't.

"Captain ... what happened to my research proposal?" Lucas asked curious.

"Sorry kiddo. It's gone. They gave the grant to a researcher over at MIT... some work on de-evolution, whatever that is," the Captain told him

"Oh," Lucas said, disappointed.

"Don't worry Lucas ... there's always another grant," the Captain said with a smile, happy to have his Lucas back. Lucas' eyes dropped closed, and he fell back to sleep. "I'll tell him about his hair next time," the Captain thought to himself.

Finita.

End
file.